



CONNECTICUT BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
FEBRUARY 28th, 2011

Good Morning Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Louis Bach and I am testifying today on behalf of the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. CBIA's 10,000 member companies represent the broad diversity of Connecticut's businesses, and the vast majority of our members are small companies with fewer than 50 employees.

Thank you for hearing testimony today on **HB 6432 AAC Closing the Achievement Gap**. Our membership has always relied on talented graduates to fill their employee ranks in order to meet the needs of the marketplace. In today's high-tech, global economy the demand for a skilled workforce is as important as it ever was. A system of education that fails to produce graduates proficient in math, science, and reading comprehension effectively reduces the state's available labor force. Further, low educational outcomes encourage the relocation of jobs to places with similarly low skills and dissimilarly low labor costs.

CBIA supports the goal of the proposed State Education Resource Center found in Section 5 of this bill insofar as its duties "may include training and continuing education seminars, publication of technical materials, research and evaluation, and other related activities," however we feel, based on the recommendations of the Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement, that students in the lowest achieving schools would be poorly served under this proposed framework unless additional steps are taken.

The proposed Resource Center should do more than provide needed seminars and technical materials; there needs to be an accounting of any given school's successes and failures. The office must further be vested with the authority to carry out a "plan B" in the event that a school simply cannot turn itself around. This office, answerable to the Commissioner, should have express authority to contract out for staffing needs and make other requisite changes in a given school.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions that I can.